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**FOREVER**  
The Bride's Resource



**Choosing an Engagement Ring / Tips for Second Weddings**  
Planning a Unity Ceremony / **Combining Finances**



*Majors + Warnock*

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**On the cover**-Shiloh Hofacket and Monty Hambrick were married at Stillwater Meadow in Aledo on June 22, 2018. Photo by 3 Birds Photography.

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# *How to choose an engagement ring that she will love within your budget*

Engagements precede wedding dresses, flower arrangements, limousines, and even a couple's wedding vows. And no proposal is complete without a ring. Knowledge of rings and stones is essential for those who plan to propose in the near future.

A recent survey from the wedding resource *The Knot* in which 12,000 brides and 1,200 grooms in the United States were asked about their rings, found that people spend an average, of \$5,978 on engagement rings. Recognizing the potential cost of engagement rings can help ring shoppers prepare for their purchases.

In addition to considering costs, couples can employ the following tips to shop with confidence.

- **Cut costs with style.** Engagement rings can be costly, but many couples feel they are worthwhile investments. According to *In Style* magazine, a ring with a classic solitaire of one carat weight can cost thousands of dollars, while a band covered in just under one carat of tiny pavé diamonds will offer plenty of sparkle for a lot less money.

- **Know your settings.** How the diamond is framed can affect how big it looks and even how much it sparkles. Gems framed with a bezel can give the illusion of a larger stone.

- **Get the desired cut.** A skilled jeweler knows how to properly cut a stone to bring out its best radiance. From round to princess to emerald to marquise cut, cut styles can affect how the stone looks as well as the price.

- **Know ring metals.** Platinum and gold are some of the most popular ring setting metals. Platinum costs considerably more than gold or silver, but is long-lasting. Couples should weigh the cost versus benefit of splurging on a more expensive metal, or



speak with a jeweler about a suitable substitute.

- **Investigate personal style.** Men should pay attention to the jewelry their girlfriends wear so the engagement rings complement their style. Some women love modern jewelry, while others gravitate toward vintage pieces.

- **Come in under carat.** Buying just shy of the next carat weight can save between 20 and 30 percent, offers *The Knot*. Plus, the size discrepancy probably will not be visible to the naked eye.

- **Think about trading up.** Some couples like to replace engagement rings with a more elaborate ring for a big anniversary. Some jewelers will accept the purchase of the engagement ring toward the price of a future ring.

Jewelry stores are in the business of developing relationships with their customers. When purchasing engagement rings, couples can discuss their desires in regard to a ring, as well as their budgets.



# *Wedding tools make planning easier*

Ensuring an event goes on with minimal hiccups takes patience and thorough planning. This is especially true for weddings, when many elements must merge together for a memorable day. Today's couples have a bevy of new resources at their disposal to facilitate wedding planning.

The internet makes vetting vendors and reading reviews that much easier, but wedding-related apps also can simplify wedding planning. The following are some top picks as culled by Wedding Shoppe, Inc., The Knot and Lifehacker.

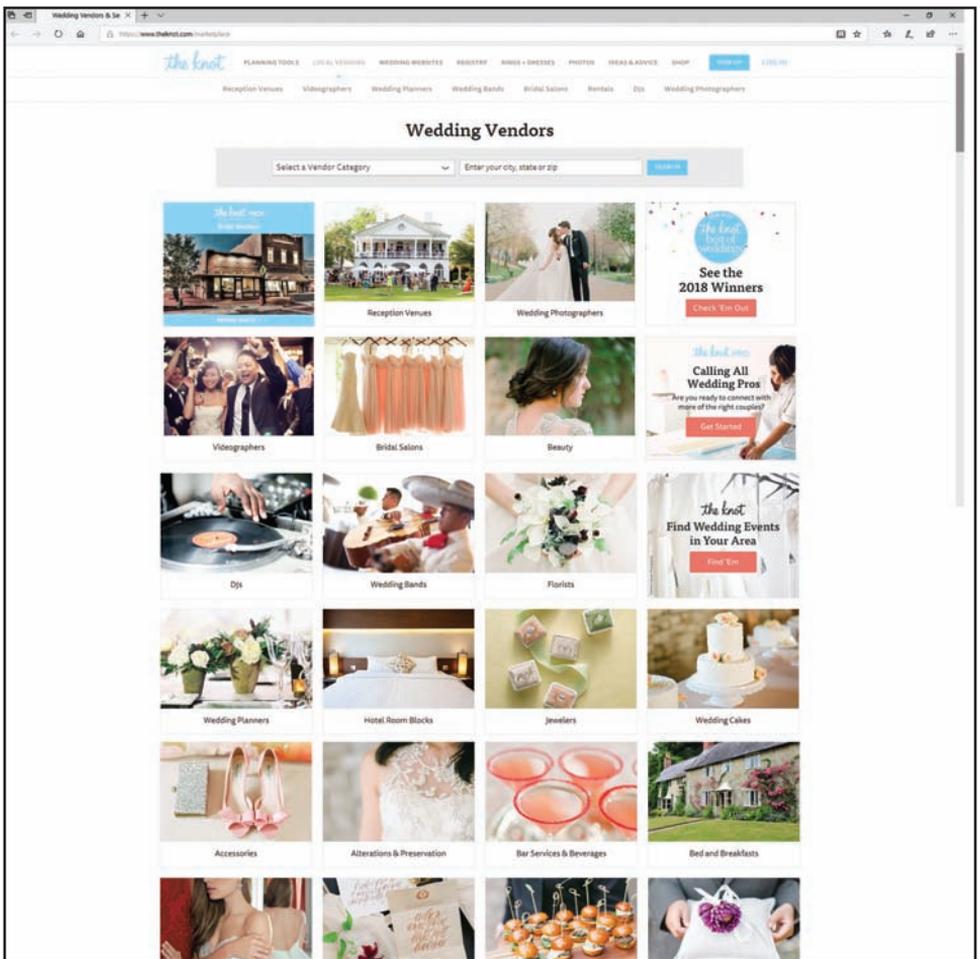
- **Wedding Spot:** Couples can search for their ideal wedding venue based on location, budget, styles, and capacity. The website enables users to plan their ideal weddings and

get cost estimates based on guest list and options. Users also can access discounts and exclusive deals.

- **Wedding LookBook:** This app enables couples to browse through thousands of dresses, accessories, jewelry, and much more. The app will help customers find products in their area.

- **Shutterfly:** This photo, invitation and image-sharing tool can be an inexpensive place to create save-the-date stationery, invitations, and photo memory books.

- **Appy Couple:** This app and website helps couples manage their budgets, timelines, wedding parties, and seating charts, while also allowing them to share photos. There is a free version and basic packages



that allow access to more features.

- **iWedding Deluxe:** In addition to managing timelines, to-do lists and vendors, this app offers inspiration ideas for gowns, manages and tracks gifts, and offers first dance suggestions from iTunes. However, it is only available to iPhone users.

- **AllSeated:** This tool can help couples figure out seating arrangements by creating 3D floor plans of the event, and couples can pull

contacts from email and social networks to establish a guest list. If floor plans are unavailable in their database, they can be drawn.

- **The Knot's Marketplace:** With the click of a button, couples can search for wedding vendors in all different categories, read reviews, and directly connect with those businesses.

- **HitchSwitch:** Brides or grooms who may be changing their names can do so in one convenient place. Three

different packages cater to various name-changing needs.

- **Vistaprint:** These stationery specialists offer an array of services, from cards to invitations to personalized envelopes. Once a design is chosen, Vistaprint will offer add-on suggestions for coordinating items, helping to create a cohesive look for the festivities.

Wedding websites, apps and more can streamline wedding planning.

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# What to include in e-vites

Paper invitations remain the invite of choice for weddings, and rightfully so. Paper invitations give wedding guests an idea of just how formal the ceremony will be and make for great mementos the happy couple can revisit for decades to come.

Though milestones like weddings are worthy of elaborate paper invitations, many other types of parties and gatherings can utilize e-vites to get the word out. E-vites may not be governed by the guidelines of more formal paper invitations, but e-vite designers should still make sure to include certain information so guests learn all they need to know about the festivities.

## Why?

When designing an e-vite, include the reason for the party. For example, let guests know if a backyard barbecue is doubling as a birthday party. Some guests might not know this if the e-vite doesn't state it, and they might feel awkward if they fail to show up with a gift for the guest of honor.

## When?

Less formal get-togethers may not be on tight schedules, but e-vites to such affairs should still dictate when parties will begin and an estimate of when they will end. If hosting a game watch or a movie night, use the e-vite to remind guests when the game starts or when you want to start the movie. Ideally, let guests arrive in advance of the main event so they have time to get settled.

## Where?

Include the full address of where the party will be held. If you're hosting at home, try to include some information about where guests can park their vehicles. If you're hosting the party at a restaurant or another public place, include parking information about those places as well, especially if parking is limited. In such instances, look into nearby parking alternatives, such as

parking garages, and include that information on the invitation as well.

## What to eat?

E-vites are not restricted by space like more traditional paper invitations. So if you're hosting a party at home, use the e-vite to inform guests about the foods you will be serving. This gives guests with dietary restrictions a chance to make other arrangements if the foods you will be serving don't align with their diets.

## RSVP

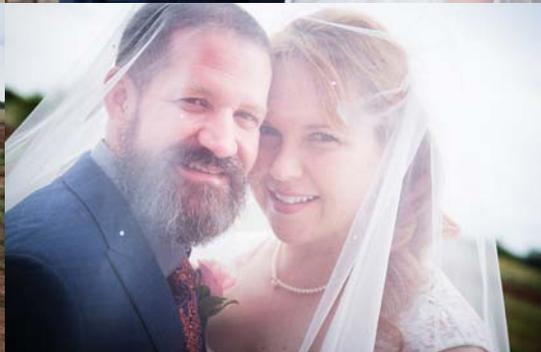
Make it as easy as possible for guests to respond to your e-vite. E-vite templates typically allow guests to click "Yes," "No," or "Maybe." Ask guests to give their final responses by a certain date.

E-vites make it easy to invite friends and family to gatherings big and small.

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# Majors + Warnock

09.02.18

Jaquita Warnock and Michael Majors tied the knot in an intimate outdoor ceremony at French Country Meadow in Wichita Falls on Sept. 2, 2018, after meeting more than two decades earlier.

The wedding theme was appropriately chosen as “Finally!” to honor the couple’s long, storied history. Jaquita, the daughter of Shirley Warnock, and Michael, the son of Joe and Patricia Majors, first met in 1997 at Midwestern State University, where Michael was a cyclist for Team Arrow.

A mutual friend, Shari (Neskorik) Vailancourt introduced the two over lunch at the Baptist Student Center. Michael finally asked Jaquita out a few weeks later, and the two dated for a year. Unfortunately, it didn’t

work out, and they went their separate ways after graduation as Michael moved back to east Texas and Jaquita stayed in Wichita Falls.

They kept in touch during the years and even tried dating again a few times, but it just never seemed right. Almost three years went by with no contact at all, when in 2015, Jaquita picked up the phone and called Michael unexpectedly. Little did she know, Michael had spent the last year coming to the realization she was “the one.”

The couple said it took some work, but he finally convinced her he was “the one” also. Twenty-one years later, they finally start the rest and best of their lives together.

Guests gathered around the couple as

they celebrated the event, watching as they exchanged vows in a short, intimate ceremony outside on a beautiful fall day with a large cross decorated in white tulle for the backdrop.

The bride's brother-in-law, Bryan, officiated the personalized ceremony, and the bride's niece served as an adorable flower girl. The bride was walked down the aisle by her mother to one of the bride's favorite songs, "Deeper than the Holler" by Randy Travis.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, it was the groom's turn to make the music selection as the couple walked back up the aisle to one of his favorites, "Never Going Outta Style" by Aaron Watson.

The bride wore a simple, yet elegant ivory sheath gown with a draped neckline and no train. A little bit of bling added by the bride's mother graced the side of the gown, with shoulders made of lace and a high keyhole on the back. A pearl necklace donned the bride's neck. The necklace and Jaquita's earrings were earned for landmark years of service at her job. Her nieces, Autumn Beebe and Cheyenne Griffin, did her hair and makeup.

The veil was waist-length with scattered rhinestones and she wore ivory lace flats. Jaquita, along with her matron of honor, Stephanie Edwards, carried bouquets of roses and lilies. Jaquita chose Sam's as the florist for the event. The matron of honor wore a short, navy blue sleeveless lace sheath dress, with a white beaded necklace, earrings and bracelet set.

The mother of the bride walked down the aisle in a long, navy blue lace and satin dress with a long pearl necklace. The flower girl was in a blue dress with a sparkly, sequined top and a tulle skirt with flowers placed in her hair.

For the men, the groom wore a custom-made navy-blue plaid suit with a slate gray shirt along with a blue and orange tie. His best man, Bryan Goins, wore the same, with the exception of a vest instead of a jacket. Their shoes were classic, wingtip brogue oxfords in blue and orange, paired with crazy fun socks.

The couple made an epic entrance into the

**Continued on page 12**

The Bride's Resource 2019

# Vendors

## Venue

French Country Meadow,  
Wichita Falls

## Wedding Planner

Maria Akrioti

## Floral Designer

Sam's

## Photographer

Denise Henderson,  
Double Heart Photography

## Catering

Bistro Express

## Cake

Dottie Hoover,  
Just Bite Me

## Hair/Makeup

Autumn Beebe and  
Cheyenne Griffin

## Reception Music

R&R Entertainment



### Continued from page 11

reception on a tandem bicycle to the songs “Bicycle Race” by Queen and “Meant to Be” by Bebe Rexha, circling the venue twice with a lot of noisy encouragement from their guests. Meanwhile, the matron of honor and best man entered to the song “Who Let the Dogs Out,” by Baha Men. Kids joined in on the fun with activity packs full of coloring books, crayons, a scavenger hunt list and a slap bracelet.

Dinner consisted of baked potatoes with all the fixings, macaroni and cheese, broccoli cheese soup, vegetarian chili and salad catered by Bistro Express. Dear friends of the bride, who own and operate a Greek restaurant, brought their famous baklava for everyone to enjoy.

Dottie Hoover, owner of Just Bite Me Creations, created the three-tiered white wedding cake with a dog peeking through the icing and a cake topper that said “Finally!”

The groom’s cake was chocolate fudge and modeled after a mountain bike trail, decorated with tiny working bikes and a dog.

The tables were decorated with white tablecloths and a charcoal gray overlay and a centerpiece consisting of a vase filled with

an arrangement of flowers, including a variety of roses, colorful daisies, and greenery. Other tables consisted of bases filled with water and floating candles set atop a mirror about 14 inches in diameter.

The main table was decorated with candles, pearls, flower arrangements and white wooden “Mr and Mrs” cutouts.

A table by the entrance welcoming guests was decorated with photos of the couple, the bride’s late father, the groom’s children and a bicycle wheel wreath made by the bride.

The couple chose “Known” by Tauren Wells for their first dance, with music provided by R and R Entertainment during the reception. There was no send off, the couple danced until the end.

The bride’s close friends, Maria Akrioti, planned the wedding and Denise Henderson with Double Heart photography captured all the special moments of the event.

The couple honeymooned at the Wildcatter Ranch Resort in Graham for two nights.

After tying the knot, the couple chose Wichita Falls as their home where Michael works as a bicycle mechanic while attending welding classes at Vernon College and Jaquita works as the neurodiagnostics coordinator at United Regional.





## *Tips for second weddings*

Taking a chance on love and marriage for the second (or third) time is certainly worthy of celebration. The Pew Research Center reports that at least four in 10 new marriages now include at least one partner who has been married before, a trend that is on the rise.

Planning a second wedding can be challenging, as individuals may be worried about proper etiquette, superstitions or meeting the expectations of others. But there are no hard rules governing second weddings.

Now that couples are older and a bit more experienced, wedding planning may be met with greater enthusiasm and patience. These tips can help the pro-

cess along.

- **Dress it up.** Brides need not eschew white if they prefer to wear it for their second weddings. White, cream, ivory, or other shades are perfectly acceptable. Also, brides can make their gowns as lavish or as simplistic as they desire. The length and style of the dress should reflect the formality and scope of the event.

- **Make it unique.** Couples who have been married before may want to set this new occasion apart from their previous weddings. Brides magazine experts suggest discussing previous celebrations and what can be done differently this time around. Couples can use this opportunity to get to know each other more

intimately by personalizing their festivities.

- **Don't feel beholden to intimate affairs.** Second weddings tend to be more intimate, as guest lists tend to be smaller and couples tying the knot again may prefer more intimacy and less hustle and bustle.

But couples should not avoid inviting people simply because second weddings are typically small affairs. Invite as many friends and family as you want and as your budget allows.

- **Set up a registry.** Established couples may have the household basics already in place, but registries can include fun or entertaining gifts that speak to couples' interests. These may include home theater systems, fancy

cookware, athletic equipment, or even funds for travel.

- **Involve the children.** Couples who have children can make them a special part of their second wedding celebrations. Kids can play any role in the ceremony, depending on their age. If the second marriage comes after an amicable divorce, couples can invite their former spouses to provide support to their children so they can feel comfortable in the wedding.

- **Be prepared.** The marriage application process is similar the second time around, but additional documents, such as a divorce decree or death certificate, may be necessary. These legal documents also will be needed for men and women who intend to change their last names after getting married.

A second marriage deserves as much celebration as the first and gives couples an opportunity to express their love for each other and their appreciation to their friends and families.



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# Hambrick + Hofacket

06.22.18

Shiloh Hofacket and Monty Hambrick were married in a vintage rustic evening ceremony at Stillwater Meadow in Aledo on June 22.

The bride, the daughter of Coit and Melanie Harris and Cory and Linda Hofacket, met her future husband, the son of Tony and Annette Davidson and Monty and Kathy Hambrick, in 2015 at Grace Fellowship Church in Paradise. The couple explained they both had a previous year full of heartache, redirection and uncertainty when it came to their love life.

Shiloh, an escrow officer at Title Resources, and Monty, a sales account manager at Austin Turf and Tractor, became friends, talking at church and having an occasional

work day lunch together, but the timing just wasn't right.

On Oct. 26, 2017, everything changed when Monty invited Shiloh over for dinner. As Monty prayed over a well thought out meal that night, Shiloh knew God was arranging something big.

A couple of weeks later, Shiloh met Monty's son, Sterling, and the two instantly became the best of friends and he even earned the nickname "Shiloh's Stinker."

Shiloh accepted Monty's proposal on Feb. 27, 2018, in front of their parents, grandparents, siblings and best friends at the end of a scavenger hunt that led to the church where they first met.

A string version of "How Great Thou

Art” was played as ushers Jon Harris and Zach Vaughn, the brothers of the bride, escorted the parents and grandparents to their seats.

Matron of honor Jessica Mowery and bridesmaids, Jennie Furstenberg, Macey Hunter, Courtney Jones, Jessica Simmons entered to “At Last” by Eva Cassidy.

The bride’s nieces, Lillie Mowery and Kinley Harris, served as flower girls.

Sterling stood as his father’s best man, with Heath Smith, Cody Hambrick, Kyle Bilby and Derrick Mowery serving as groomsmen.

Logan Mowery and Lane Mowery, nephews of the bride, were ringbearers.

The bride was escorted down the aisle by her father and stepfather to the “Bridal March.” Pastor Rocky Johnson of Grace Fellowship Church officiated the double-ring ceremony. Vows were exchanged not only between the bride and groom, but from the bride to new stepson, Sterling, as well.

Soloists Alanna and Audrey Burnett sang “Make You Feel My Love” while the bride, groom and son participated in a unity puzzle ceremony.

The couple asked their guests to join in worship to “Holy Spirit” by Bryan and Katie Torwalt.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the couple walked back down the aisle to the fun tune of “Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I’m Yours)” by Stevie Wonder.

Blush and burgundy were the colors of choice for the event, which was filled with burgundy chrysanthemums, peach blush, cream and white garden roses, peonies in assorted pinks, blue thistle, white hydrangeas and an assortment of antique silver family heirlooms. The couple chose Lauren Mowery as the florist.

The bride looked stunning in a white strapless gown with a sweetheart neckline, adorned with a lace corset bodice and full tulle skirt with her mother’s veil. Anastasia Smith did the bride’s hair and Victoria Loper, her makeup.

The bridesmaids wore floor length, alternating burgundy and blush dresses in assorted styles, while the flower girl was dressed in a blush tulle dress with floral details.

**Continued on page 18**

The Bride’s Resource 2019

# Vendors

## Venue

Stillwater Meadow

## Reception Venue

Stillwater Meadow

## Floral Designer

Lauren Mowery

## Photographer

3 Birds Photography

## Catering

The Patriotic Pig

## Cake

Cakes by Leisha

## Hair & Makeup

Anastasia Smith - Hair  
Victoria Loper - Makeup

## Reception Music

DJ Kyle Grimes

## Honeymoon

Sandals Resort-  
Montego Bay, Jamaica



**Continued from page 17**

The groom chose jeans, a burgundy vest and grey jacket, and for the groomsmen, jeans with a burgundy vest and tie.

The ceremony décor included more burgundy chrysanthemums, peach blush, cream and white roses, peonies in assorted pinks, blue thistle, white hydrangeas and an assortment of antique silver family heirlooms. The centerpieces contained assorted flowers with a photo of the bride and groom.

The Patriotic Pig catered a dinner of bris-ket, sausage, turkey, beans, mashed potatoes, mac-n-cheese and potato salad. Guests had their choice of tea, water, beer or wine.

Dinner was followed by dancing and a garter and bouquet toss with DJ Kyle Grimes providing the music. Friend of the bride Foster Naylor sang “Yours” by Russell Dickerson as the couple shared their first

dance.

The bride danced with her father to “My Little Girl” by Tim McGraw, along with “Hey Baby Que Paso.” The groom danced with his mother to “Humble and Kind” also by Tim McGraw.

Guests enjoyed the three-tier red velvet, strawberry and white cake with naked icing adorned with flowers created by Cakes by Leisha.

3 Birds Photography was in attendance to capture every special moment.

After a night full of love and fun, guests lined up with sparklers as the couple exited the venue. They honeymooned at the Sandals Resort in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and then returned to their home in Paradise where they are active in their church and are having fun adjusting to life as a family of three.



# Choosing attendants for your wedding party

Making the important decision to get married can fill couples with joy and excitement as they imagine spending the rest of their lives together. Naturally, brides-and grooms-to-be are anxious to share the good news with others and include family and friends in the festivities. One way couples exemplify inclusion is by asking their closest acquaintances to be part of their wedding parties.

Being asked to serve as a bridesmaid or groomsman is an honor. Some couples may be tempted to ask every friend, sibling or cousin they have to be in their wedding parties, and some do. In fact, ancient Ro-



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man law required 10 witnesses to be part of the wedding ceremony. However, the larger the wedding party, the more people couples have to coordinate and the more personalities they must manage.

While large wedding parties are in style, there isn't any one-size-fits-all formula to decide which size party is right for a particular situation. Trends vary based on geography and culture. These tips can help couples decide on the size of their wedding parties.

- Match it to scope and style. Wedding planners may use a standard ratio for a proportion of guests to wedding party members. That ratio is one pair of wedding attendants for every 50 guests. This creates a balanced feel where the more people in attendance, the larger the wedding party and vice versa.

- Consider your expenses. Wedding party members may be asked to spend considerable amounts of money to be in the wedding, but the couple will have certain expenses tied to the wedding party as well.

These can include limousines to ferry people between the ceremony and reception, photography costs to arrange and photograph large wedding parties, the cost of boutonnieres and bouquets, attendants' gifts, as well as extra mouths to feed at the rehearsal dinner. Small wedding parties can be easier on couples' budgets.

- Know your expectations. Couples should discuss what they expect from their wedding parties. Do couples want their loved ones to be very hands-on or waiting in the wings? For those who want a lot of input from their wedding parties, asking distant friends or family to be included may be impractical.

- Select reliable, easygoing people. Wedding party members should be people couples can rely on, and it only helps if wedding party members are not prone to overreacting. Choose a wedding party that can be trusted and people with whom you get along.

Wedding party sizes are up to the couple, but bigger isn't always better.



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# *Choosing a unity ceremony*

Weddings celebrate the joining together of hearts, families and homes. The unification of a couple pledging vows to each other is the key component of the ceremony, and unity rituals are common during both traditional and nontraditional weddings.

Unity ceremonies represent the magic of two people coming together as one. Unity rituals may be built into certain religious or cultural weddings as a normal part of the festivities. Other couples may want to embrace the idea of a unity ceremony to add something extra special to their ceremonies.

Couples seeking creative options for unity rituals as part of their wedding ceremonies can explore these clever ideas.

- **Candle lighting:** The lighting of a unity candle is one of the more recognizable and traditional unity rituals. During this ritual, the bride and the groom each light an individual candle and then together light a

larger candle, which celebrates them coming together as one.

- **Sand pouring:** The pouring of sand into a vessel also is a popular unity ritual. In this ritual, couples choose two sands of different colors and then pour their respective colors into a vessel, allowing the different hues to mix together. This ritual can be expanded to include other family members, with a rainbow of colors blending for a now unified joining of families.

- **Unity cross:** Christians may enjoy a unity cross ritual at their ceremony. A unity cross is a decorative cross with a holder, and the cross is held in place by three pins, which symbolize the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. During this ritual, the bride, groom and officiant will each set a pin in place.

- **Tree planting:** Planting a tree or shrub that can grow with the marriage is a green idea and one that takes unity rituals to a dif-

ferent level. Couples can place the sapling in a decorative pot and then take turns watering it. Later the tree can be planted outside the couple's first home.

- **Lasso ceremony:** This ritual is traditional in many Spanish- and Filipino-speaking countries. After vows are exchanged, the officiant wraps a floral garland or rosary around the couple. At the end of the ceremony, the garland is saved as a symbol of unity and love.

- **Handfasting:** This ritual comes from an ancient Celtic tradition that bounds the bride and groom's right hands together during the wedding ceremony. Handfasting symbolizes couples' commitments to one another.

- **Flower ceremony:** In this ritual, couples can exchange roses or a favorite flower and then place them in a vase or basket. All members of the family also are invited to place a single flower into the vessel, which ultimately results in a beautiful floral dis-



play.

Couples can create their own unique unity ceremonies. The blending of any two materials, such as wine, tea, glass beads, or paint, or even the traditional tying of knots will convey the symbolism of joining as one.

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# The Venue

Surrounded by open pastures, rolling hills, mature oaks and a 2.5 acre vineyard, OG Cellars Winery & Vineyard sits in the midst of a 320-acre working ranch positioned at the third highest elevation in Wise County, Texas.

Its 2,000 sq. ft. cedar framed wine deck, and over 1,500 sq. ft. of covered patio space provide guests with perfect venues for enjoying panoramic landscapes and some of the most incredible sunsets Texas has to offer.



## Location Uses

- Wedding Ceremonies
- Wedding Receptions
- Rehearsal Dinners
- Private Parties
- Birthdays & Anniversaries
- Reunions
- Engagement Parties
- Holiday Parties
- Business Functions & Meetings

OG Cellars offers a variety of wines crafted in the old-world style by award-winning winemaker, James Hanger, and its special events Barrel Room provides seating for up to 100 guests. An adjacent bar, caterer's kitchen, beautifully appointed bridal dressing room and a state-of-the-art electronics system highlight its many amenities.



## Location

Only a 50-minute drive from Wichita Falls and just under an hour's drive from downtown Ft. Worth, OG Cellars is located at 704 CR 1895, Sunset TX in northwest Wise County.

## Contact Us

OG Cellars Winery & Vineyard  
Owners: James & Sammi Hanger  
(940) 867-7669  
ogcellars@gmail.com

# Planning the reception menu

Weddings are memorable for a host of reasons. While couples remember their weddings because they mark the day they officially tied the knot, guests may remember weddings for other reasons, including the food served at the reception.

Some wedding venues are known for their stunning landscapes, while others build their reputations on unique interiors that provide unforgettable ambiance. But regardless of where weddings take place, guests are liable to discuss the food served at the reception. Guests might rave about the escargot or complain that the fish was flaky, but couples who choose reception menus wisely can go a long way toward ensuring there are more compliments than complaints once the dinner bell rings.

- Don't zero in on specialties. According to The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, a survey of nearly 13,000 brides and grooms who tied the knot in 2017, the average wedding hosted 136 guests. While couples might be tempted by specialty dishes when choosing their wedding menus, couples who are hosting dozens, if not hundreds, of guests should keep things



simple.

- Consider potential allergies. In regard to entrées, make sure guests with food allergies can choose something that won't make them sick. According to Food Allergy Research & Education®, an organization devoted to improving the quality of life of individuals with food allergies, some common foods cause the majority of allergic reactions. Peanuts, soy, sesame, and shellfish are among the most common food allergies, according to FARE®. FARE also notes that allergies to wheat, milk and eggs are common in children. While such foods can still be served at wedding receptions, make sure to also include foods that are unlikely to trigger allergic reactions. Couples can even ask guests to inform them of any food allergies.

- Don't hesitate to offer

a favorite food. While specialty entrées might not be a great choice, especially at large receptions where lots of mouths must be fed, a couple who has a favorite food that's symbolic of their relationship should not hesitate to offer it during the cocktail hour.

- Offer an elaborate dessert. The last bite guests will take is dessert, so couples who want their guests to go home raving about the food may want to offer something special after the entrées have been taken away. Some guests may not indulge, but those who do might end their nights thinking about the delicious dessert they enjoyed as the festivities drew to a close.

Choosing a wedding menu should be fun. Menus should reflect not only couples' tastes but also include some popular foods so no one goes home hungry.

# Choosing where to honeymoon

Engaged couples spend lots of time and money planning their weddings. The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study found that the average couple who married in 2017 spent more than \$33,000 on their weddings. If that figure raises eyebrows, couples may be even more surprised to learn it does not include the cost of a honeymoon.

Honeymoons often mark couples' first trip together after tying the knot. The 2017 Real Weddings Study found that the average engagement length in 2017 was 14 months, and many couples are no doubt ready for a getaway after spending more than a year planning their weddings. Whether couples are working with shoestring budgets or have some financial flexibility, it's wise to consider various factors before choosing a honeymoon destination.

## Distance

A remote, exotic island might sound like the perfect place for couples to visit on their honeymoons. However, couples who spent more than a year planning their weddings may prefer somewhere less remote than an exotic isle that requires multiple flight transfers and possibly even days of travel to get to. Couples should discuss how much travel they're willing to endure during their honeymoons, and then find somewhere that both partners are excited about.

## Amenities

Many resorts offer honeymoon packages that include a host of amenities, including all-inclusive food and beverage, spa access, access to water sports, and even airport pickup and dropoff. Such packages can save couples substantial amounts of money, which can help those who might have spent more on their weddings than they initially intended.

## Recreation

Couples also may want to consider the



accessibility of local recreational activities before choosing a honeymoon destination. Some couples may just want to spend the duration of their honeymoons unwinding on a beach, while others may want to mix relaxation with exploration. All-inclusive resort packages may or may not include off-site resort activities. Couples who want to do some exploring away from their resorts should investigate both the accessibility and safety of doing so.

## Budget

If budgets were stretched for the wedding, couples should not discount the benefits of planning a post-wedding weekend getaway and then saving some money for a more traditional honeymoon down the road. This option still affords couples a chance to spend a few post-wedding days away from home and can help them save for a honeymoon trip they will never forget.

Couples should consider a host of factors before choosing a honeymoon destination.

# PLACES TO HONEYMOON

## *Venice, Italy*

Italy has long been a favorite honeymoon location for newlyweds. After all, nothing says “amore” quite like a gondola ride through the Grand Canal. Take a romantic stroll around Piazza San Marco to feel the scale of the domes of the Basilica di San Marco or the beautiful and ornate details of Palazzo Ducale. Then, escape the sights and sounds of the city with a dreamy boat ride to one of the unspoiled islands nearby.



## *Kyoto, Japan*



Compared with the frenetic energy of Japan’s capital city Tokyo, Kyoto moves at a languid pace. Relax and reflect at hundreds of shrines and temples or stroll through peaceful gardens. Visit during the spring or fall. In spring, the cherry blossom trees are in full bloom, while fall reveals a beautiful mix of classic autumn colors. Before it gets dark, enjoy a leisurely walk around Gion, past machiya.

## *Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

Stepping out onto the city’s iconic beaches—ringed by jagged mountains, with the buzz of vendors and foot-volley players and the sight of itsy-bitsy bikinis—will have you humming. Guests of the hotel may arrange for a private sunrise picnic at the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue—before the usual hordes of sightseers arrive.



## *Tulum, Mexico*



The city of Tulum is an hour and a half from the airport in Cancun, it’s home to an ancient Mayan village, and it won’t break a budget strained from paying for a wedding. Take a break from the beach to tour the ruins of the pre-Columbian Maya walled city. But make sure you bring your bathing suit: A staircase nearby leads down to a slice of beach where you can swim and sunbathe.

# Combining finances after the wedding

Happy couples experience various changes after tying the knot. One of those changes concerns couples' finances.

According to an analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households, arguments about money are a frequent concern with married couples. Furthermore, there is a higher correlation between the risk of divorce and the prevalence of financial disagreements. While fights about money do not necessarily cause divorce, they can create rifts in relationships.

Even couples who have plenty of money may have disagreements about their finances. Arguments may stem from couples not understanding how their partner views money or the disparities in spending habits among partners. Couples who make early efforts to get on the same page concerning finances may have smoother waters ahead than those who delay such discussions.

- Establish goals together. Couples should define their financial goals together. Is it a goal to save for early retirement? Is a house in the immediate future? Is frequent travel a desire? Are we planning to contribute much to future children's educations? These questions and more need to be addressed early on. By creating a financial plan together, couples can more clearly map out their financial futures.

- Combining accounts may be easier. Some couples want to maintain their full financial independence. But combining accounts can help couples avoid arguments about secrecy and concerns about partner spending. Combining accounts also affords couples a clearer picture of their spending



and saving habits.

- Assess debts as a team. One person may be bringing more debt to the marriage than another. It's important for all cards to be on the table and to work together to eradicate debt. If a person will be coming to the marriage with poor credit, it may be worth it to keep things separate until a spouse works on remedying his or her finances, according to Credit.com.

- Decide how to split expenses. One partner may make more money than the other, and one may spend more time handling household needs or future childcare responsibilities. Couples need to agree whether one person pays for certain bills exclusively, whether they spend from one salary and save the other, or combine finances completely and spend equally, offers NerdWallet.

Engaged couples who develop a post-wedding financial plan may find their transition to being married much easier than those who delay such discussions.



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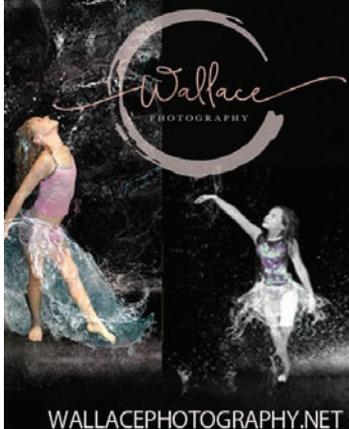
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